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ABSTRACT

Miami University's (Ohio) two-course educational psychology sequence for prospective teachers has been redesigned to incorporate early field experiences. Concerns about the congruence of field tasks with course content, as well as about limiting situation constraints, were addressed by a committee on teacher preparation. Currently, each semester course in educational psychology requires six visits into field classrooms for the purpose of unobtrusive observation only, with no interaction between observer and pupils and teachers. A variety of assignments, relating directly to lecture content of the course, ask students to observe such phenomena as the school environment, the classroom environment, a person in the school, or a passive object in the school. In this document, which details the advent and development of the educational psychology field experiences, examples of the field experiences and activities are described, concerning: (1) perception; (2) operant conditioning; (3) training observation; (4) classroom observation and expectation; (5) observing behavioral learning principles; (6) coding classroom communication patterns; (7) classroom patterns and teacher behavior; (8) objectives and teacher questions; and (9) transfer of learning and problem solving. (JD)

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# MOVING OUT: INTEGRATING EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCES INTO PROGRAM STRUCTURES

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Moving Out: Integrating Early Field Experiences into Program Structures

When the decision was made at Miami University to incorporate early and continuous field based observation and participation experiences in all teacher preparation programs, all professional education courses were redesigned to include a proportionate share of such experiences rather than to institute a separate course for that purpose. The spirit of this decision was clear. Not only were field experiences included in all professional and core courses but also the content of each course was thoroughly revised to integrate the field assignments meaningfully. One of the professional components which was "redesigned" was the two course sequence in educational psychology. The first of these courses is taken typically during the freshman year and the second during the sophomore year. These two classes are prerequisite to most certification specific professional courses at Miami; therefore, the cognitive and affective outcomes of the integrated field assignments impact heavily on the professional courses which follow.

In order to facilitate the redesign process and to insure balance and articulation of different levels of programming, a committee on teacher preparation was constituted. This group coordinated the program planning among the certification area

teams and provided an arena for negotiation between teams and core area departments. An office of field experience was created and field coordinators were appointed to manage the off-campus aspects such as contracting with school systems for field sites and arranging transportation from campus to the specific locations. Although a master plan of generic objectives was developed for all programs, each academic department maintained autonomy in the development of content specific objectives and the specification of clinical and field activities to be assigned to students within courses. Thus it was that a small core of faculty persons in the Department of Educational Psychology restructured the course content in the two basic courses and began to develop and implement field experience assignments. From the first brave attempts by two members of this group to create meaningful field tasks and to integrate them into the sophomore level course on a pilot basis have grown the variety and complexity of assignments currently being incorporated in both of the required educational psychology courses. A sampling of the intervening concerns and the progress made is described in this presentation.

One of the major difficulties from the beginning was the problem of establishing priorities with regard to the basic content which traditionally has been taught in educational psychology. The issue of priority setting became critical primarily because the introduction of field experience into existing courses with no increase in credit hours reduced the lecture time by one fourth and shrank content presentation time even further as a consequence of the need to give instructions

for field tasks and to provide feedback about the results. Decisions about content priorities were complicated further by the fact that some important content is extremely difficult to translate into a level of application which is appropriate for students so early in the teacher education sequence. As a consequence of this concern it became necessary to provide more extensive training in observation skills and to develop some degree of sensitivity to the human relations aspects of entering public schools and classrooms as observers. These very necessary elements had the effect of compressing even further the time available for the traditional educational psychology content. Although course instructors continue to be frustrated by the press of time, much has been accomplished with the result that the content now being addressed in the undergraduate educational psychology sequence is of high priority, i.e. more relevant and more applicable to current practice in the public schools. It may also be true that the instruction in the college classes has become more "cost effective" in terms of time management as both professors and students make discoveries and solve problems which arise in and through the actual field experiences. Specifically, a number of field assignments have been developed and tested which present content in practical and creative ways. A few examples are appended to this paper.

Not only have course content outlines changed as a result of introducing field experiences but the tasks assigned to students have been modified to a great extent over the three years since the reorganization of teacher education programs at Miami. The

early pilot field tasks in educational psychology utilized some unobtrusive observation activities but also required students to engage in a considerable amount of interaction with pupils in the classrooms being observed. Those pilot experiences called for students to visit public school classrooms only five times during a semester and each visit was to be of one hour duration. As the full implementation began, both the number of visits and the length of time involved were expanded. It was soon discovered that the expense of transportation and the large number of students involved required some reassessment of the circumstances. Currently, each semester course in educational psychology requires six visits into field classrooms with each visit of two hours duration. During that first semester of full implementation another situational constraint became very apparent. The assigned tasks which requested students to interact directly with pupils were found to be unacceptable by public school administrators. One of the most compelling arguments was that pupils and teachers did not wish to interrupt very busy schedules to accommodate college student activities which in turn served little or no purpose for the pupils. A second problem which raised even greater alarm was that interaction activities were not only intrusive but might be construed to be "tests" and as such, to invade privacy and therefore require specific written consent of parents. It rapidly became very clear that if the concept of field experience was to become a regular practice, the assignments required of students would, of necessity, become limited to unobtrusive observations only. Although this limitation at first

appeared to deny students some of the most valuable opportunities to apply principles of learning and motivation, the outcome has proven less constricting than expected. As the clarity and appropriateness of assignments have been improved, teachers and administrators have become less threatened by the presence of observers and some have actually invited the college students to participate in ways which have contributed positively to both pupil progress and student learning. Most recent experience has indicated much willingness on the part of classroom teachers to arrange activities which facilitate the fulfillment of the college students' assignments and, in addition, to find the time for conversation with the observers about classroom events.

One situational constraint which will continue to be of concern is tied to the availability of classrooms, the numbers of students, and the transportation time from campus to the more distant school sites. When assignments are prepared prior to the beginning of a semester, it is not known what grade levels or in what subject areas students will be able to observe. On the average there have been approximately 400 students going out from the two undergraduate educational psychology courses each semester. Since ALL professional courses involve some number of clinical and field activities, it is a forbidding task to build a master schedule which accommodates the many requests for field placement. After the general schedule is established, each faculty member in educational psychology fits it into the course content sequence and makes decisions about which tasks will be assigned; all of this activity occurs BEFORE the semester begins.

It is only after assignments and course outlines have been prepared that specific placements can be made - from kindergarten through senior high school, in all subject areas including special education. The educational psychology observers may find themselves being asked to complete a task which is totally inappropriate for the situation in which they find themselves. Obviously, much flexibility must be maintained by the course instructors as they evaluate the written reports submitted by students following the field time. Perhaps instead of pointing to this circumstance as a constraint, the emphasis should be on the growth potential for flexibility and discovery learning.

The sample assignments selected for this presentation were chosen to illustrate not only the variety of topics but also the levels of complexity which may be involved. Two sets of tasks from the first course are provided in brief form to demonstrate the degree of individuality which can be maintained by different instructors. Three assignments from the second course are presented in complete form as examples of the utilization of traditional content applied in live settings. The reader must bear in mind that each of the tasks presented must have the potential for being completed in a very wide variety of classroom situations. The instructions for each task must be sufficiently structured for evaluation purposes, yet be open enough to permit allowances for exceptional circumstances. The samples included here represent only a small minority of the many which have been put into practice during the past six semesters. New ones continue to be developed with each new term.

No description of the incorporation of field experience into undergraduate educational psychology would be complete without at least a brief report of the students' comments and evaluations of assignments. As might be expected, a few students complain that they have learned little as a consequence of going into field classrooms, and the blame is usually put on the inadequacy of the instructions, the inappropriateness of the tasks or the lack of "interesting" activities in the classrooms observed. In contrast, the majority of students report that the opportunity to be in "real, live classrooms" contributes much toward their understanding of concepts presented in the lecture part of the course. Many students, in fact, maintain that the field experience is the most valuable part of their program. Students have also been willing to suggest additional tasks for field observations and to recommend helpful revisions to the assignments in current use. There appears to be a positive relationship between student liking for field assignments and the degree of integration of the tasks into the content of the course. Some students have also expressed the opinion that the enthusiasm of the instructor for the potential benefit of field experience has a great impact on their own expectations and therefore on the positive gain realized from the experience. Those students who give evidence of being highly motivated to become teachers have been overwhelmingly positive about the value of field experience in educational psychology.

This paper has described the advent and development of field experience assignments in the two beginning level educational

psychology courses at Miami University. Some concerns about the congruence of field tasks with course content have been pointed out and some of the more limiting situational constraints have been delineated. Several sample assignments have been presented along with some general evaluative comments which have been offered by students. It should be evident at this point t. t the inception and integration of field experience has been a developmental process which continues to find and resolve challenges and which provides more relevance and practical application in teacher education at Miami University.

DESCRIPTION OF FIELD EXPERIENCES

EDP 111 B -- Professor Miller
Miami University

Fall Semester 1982

September 13-17 -- PERCEPTION

The students will be observing pupil behavior and curriculum events for specific examples related to perceptual processes, especially to the phenomena of selection, organization, and interpretation of sensory input. The students will have a list of perceptual factors taken from their textbook. Most students will request to examine the textbook, workbook, or other materials being used in the class.

September 20-24 -- OPERANT CONDITIONING

The students are asked to carefully observe one pupil at a time in order to determine the "pay-offs" or consequences which follow that pupil's behavior and whether or not the behavior is repeated. The students will write a report describing these observations using the terminology of behavior modification as derived from Skinner's theory of operant conditioning.

October 11-15 -- TRAINING OBSERVATION

The students will observe as completely and accurately as possible (1) the school environment, (2) the classroom environment, (3) a person in the school, and (4) a passive object in the school. The student's report will consist of descriptive statements followed by an analysis and interpretation. The students are not looking for specific things but are simply practicing making accurate observations.

NOTE: In no case will pupils or teachers be identified by name. These field experiences are to aid our students in transferring book knowledge to real-life situations and no report will be used in an unethical or unprofessional manner.

Educational Psychology 111 - Fraser Section C Field Activities

(Sept. 14) 1st Field Assignment: Classroom Observation and the Role of Expectancy

Objectives To identify the students' mental sets about classroom activities

To distinguish between observed behavior and inference

To practice careful observation techniques

Activity: Prior to the school visit, each student will list expectations related to the classroom setting. During the field visit, the students will unobtrusively observe classroom activities in order to identify the validity of their expectations.

(Sept. 21) 2nd Field Assignment: Observing Behavioral Learning Principles

Objective: To identify applications of various learning principles in classroom situations

Activity: Each student will unobtrusively observe and note examples of learning principles such as positive reinforcement, shaping, extinction, etc.

(Oct. 12) 3rd Field Assignment: Coding Classroom Communication Patterns

Objective: To practice time-sampling observation and coding skills to use coded behavioral observations to develop inferences about classroom interaction

Activity: The students will unobtrusively observe classroom activities noting verbal interaction patterns and coding them on an interaction matrix. Patterns will be coded during alternate one-minute intervals.

EDP 112 - Roberds
Field experience- Lab #1
February 1, 1983

CLASSROOM PATTERNS,
TEACHER BEHAVIORS

Instructions. This assignment is intended to facilitate the development of observational skills, especially for a first time visit in a given classroom. Before more specific observations can be used, a few general classroom patterns need to be noted. Some preliminary assessment of time structuring, use of space, and movement will provide a framework which will facilitate other types of observations.

Time. Since this variable relates to all the others, it is the one which is noted first and must be continaully recorded throughout all the remaining observation period. Be a clock watcher. As you continue the observations, keep a running tabulation of the time in order to summarize for the report form. How time is structured in a classroom can indicate the relative importance of the various activities. Teachers are not always aware of the implications of the way they apportion time. A visitor must recognize that since only a small sample of total school time will be observed; any interpretive comments must be very tentative and carefully stated. At the conclusion of the observation period, look back over all time notations and write a brief summary for the report. The summary should be intentionally objective but the personal comment section is for the sharing of subjective, evaluative hypotheses.

Space. After the starting time has been recorded, actual observation of a classroom should begin with a survey of the physical environment. Arrangement of furniture, centers of visual attention, and availability of necessary books and supplies can be very revealing about the organization of a classroom. Take detailed notes about the use of space which can be summarized later for the report.

Movement-interaction. During the time available for observation note the basic travel patterns of the teacher(s) and, if possible, some of the moves of pupils. As you observe you will develop your own system of "shorthand" note taking in order to maximize meaning as you minimize writing time. One useful technique is to observe for 1 or 2 minutes and then write for 1 or 2 minutes alternatively. After the observation period is over, go over your notes and select appropriate examples for the report. Personal reactions and interpretations should be reported in the comment section. Although objectivity is very important in the observation process, it is also true that an observer should engage in critical thinking and be able to verbalize personal reactions at the end of the experience.

Second Task-P.E.R.K. By the time you have completed the first task, you should be able to focus your attention on specific teacher behaviors which illustrate each of the four categories known to be associated with effective teaching. For example, there are many ways in which a teacher can demonstrate enthusiasm both by verbal statements and by nonverbal body movements and facial expression. Use quotation marks in your notes for actual teacher words. Make note of several behaviors in each category from which to select two of the best examples of each for reporting purposes.

Planning - Enthusiasm - Relationships - Knowledge

Report format Lab #1, name, date

Situation description; Time-objective summary, personal comments;
Space and Movement - descriptions and/or diagrams, examples, comments;
P.E.R.K. - two examples of each class of behaviors, general comments.

EDP 112 - Roberds
Field experience Lab #5
March 1, 1983

OBJECTIVES AND
TEACHER QUESTIONS

Objectives: The 112 student will:
Infer teaching objectives from observation of classroom interaction and classify each according to domain and level of complexity.
Identify examples of teacher questions and code each example according to categories given.

TASK ONE: Observe for 10-15 minutes in order to become sensitive to the dynamics of the classroom. Observe the next 15-20 minutes in order to make note of the general and specific objectives which are the focus of instruction. Identify which objectives are presented directly during the time you are in the classroom (visually on charts or chalkboard, or orally by the teacher) and also note those which were inferred from observed behavior. LIST from three to five GENERAL goals being addressed during the observation time and label each according to domain and level. For each general goal WRITE AT LEAST ONE related specific objective being worked on by individual pupils. Each specific objective should be labeled by domain and level.

TASK TWO: Use the remainder of the observation time to give special attention to the questions asked by the teacher and to the answers given and accepted. Record in short form all questions asked during a 10 - 20 minute time block (note actual time) and label each question according to the apparent purpose. Use the following categories:

R - repetition, review, recall, drill
M - to facilitate memory using structure, imagery, meaning
I - to promote inquiry, discovery, opinions, new ideas
D - discipline, rules, correct behavior, get learner on task
P - social, interpersonal, evident caring in listening
O - other, suggest a new category

Describe in longer form AT LEAST FOUR different sets of questions and answers in addition to the brief list and codes described above.

REPORT FORMAT:
At the TOP of the page write Lab #5, name and date of observation
General description of situation, level, topics, other variables
Goals and objectives appropriately labeled.
Coded question list, time, 4 example sets.
COMMENTS AND EVALUATION OF EXPERIENCE -
Write a brief paragraph analyzing your own perceptions and assessing the learning value of the assignment.

EDP 112 - Roberds
Field experience Lab #6
March 8, 1983

TRANSFER OF LEARNING
AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Objectives: The 112 student will:
- Identify and describe appropriate examples of transfer in the observed classroom.
- Identify and describe examples of observed teacher and pupil behaviors which illustrate steps toward problem solving.
- Write at least three recommendations for specific use of problem solving strategies in the observed classroom.

TASK ONE: Observe for 20-30 minutes in order to look for and make note of specific examples of efforts to facilitate transfer between school learning and the "real world." Try to identify examples of each type of transfer listed below. Examples may be descriptions of materials, activities and/or teacher or pupil verbal behaviors. Make note of several examples of each type, if possible, in order to have a variety from which to select for your report. Be sure to describe each example in sufficient detail so that it is clearly appropriate to the category identified. Describe at least one example of each of at least FOUR of the following categories.

1. positive transfer of skills
2. positive transfer of principles
3. avoiding negative transfer
4. vertical transfer
5. set, either positive or negative
6. specific task similarity

TASK TWO: Use the remainder of the observation time to make note of pupil or teacher behaviors which demonstrate one or more steps of problem solving. Identify examples of pupils using problem solving skills and of teacher efforts to encourage discovery learning. Report at least three examples. After the observation time is completed, devise and explain three recommendations intended to develop further the problem solving skills of the pupils in the specific situation observed. Since you are not the actual teacher and therefore, are not responsible for the classroom, you can be creative in preparing suggestions; but keep in mind the limits of reality.

REPORT FORMAT:
- At the TOP of the page write Lab #6, name and date of observation
- Describe the situation, grade level, subjects, etc.
- Identify FOUR examples of efforts to facilitate transfer.
- Report THREE examples of problem solving skills observed.
- Write THREE recommendations for increasing the use of problem solving skills in the observed classroom.
- COMMENTS AND EVALUATION OF EXPERIENCE -
  Write a brief paragraph describing your personal reactions and your prediction of success for your recommendations.